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ABSTRACT

This program selected 252 students on the basis of teacher recommendations and kindergarten survey test scores. Students were divided into teams and remained with an Intensive Reading Instructional Team for 10 weeks. Moving from teacher to teacher at hourly intervals each morning, students met with teachers specializing in one of three crucial areas of reading. "These areas were: the decoding program, which included instruction in word analysis and word attach skills; language development and enrichment program, which stressed vocabulary and comprehension development; and the visual and auditory perception program, which was designed to develop an enjoyment of reading...." (KG)

P.C. No. 004

Center for Urban Education

Program Conspectus

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Program: Intensive Reading Instructional Teams (IRIT)

Location: Hartford, Connecticut

Date Started: September 1965. In the first 3 years the program was directed to students in grades 3-6 from 14 schools. In 1968-69 the emphasis was shifted to 1st graders.

Scope: In 1968-69, 252 students "were selected for the program on the basis of both teacher recommendations and Kindergarten Survey test scores and...remained with an IRIT team for approximately 10 weeks. 1 group, made up mainly of non-English speakers was retained at a center for 2 consecutive cycles...." (R6,p.77)

Staff: The staff comprises: 1 project director; 3 reading specialists; 6 reading teachers; 3 clerk-typist aides; 1 secretary.

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Special Materials, Equipment, & Facilities: Materials presently used by the program are specified in the accompanying description of activities. In prior years a special text was designed for use with children in grades 3-6: Fraser, Alice G. Flee-Zees. Hartford, Connecticut, Public Schools, 1967.

Description of Activities:

"Located in three rented facilities, [IRIT used] a departmentalized structure as the format for teamed reading instruction. Moving from teacher to teacher at hourly intervals each morning pupils were able to meet with teachers specializing in one of three crucial areas of reading. These areas were: the decoding program, which included instruction in word analysis and word attack skills; language development and enrichment program, which stressed vocabulary and comprehension development; and the visual and auditory perception program, which was designed to develop an enjoyment of reading...."

In the decoding area, "Sullivan Materials were used as they presented a code-emphasis method: i.e., one that emphasized letters, sounds and the blending of sounds into words. The words introduced were regular ones, and this facilitated the skill of word analysis. A variety of materials which stressed letters and sounds were used to reinforce the decoding core area. The Merrill Linguistic Readers, the S.R.A. Linguistic Readers and the Lippincott Readers were correlated with the Sullivan materials whenever possible. This articulation proved to be most beneficial in pulling all the words of one pattern together, thus making the use of this technique for unlocking words more meaningful to the children while at the same time providing for a multi-approach to beginning reading. The need for a sight approach to reading was met through the use of pictures, repetition and the use of Language Masters to relate both visual and auditory stimuli."

"The language development and enrichment area concentrated on the development of oral communication and the improvement of vocabulary concepts. Skills in listening and speaking were stressed together with the understanding that 'reading' was 'speech' written down. Tape recordings and record players using headsets were used extensively to develop good listening skills. Favorite stories were listened to while pupils followed the story in the book. Telephone instruments were used to stimulate conversation between children. Special tape lessons were prepared by the teacher on letter sounds with accompanying worksheets. The use of the headsets was also to improve listening to follow directions."

"The visual and auditory perception area...focused on the training of pupils to develop a comprehension of basic forms; to perceive size, shape, and lines both straight and curved; and to develop a good image of the body as an assist in the building of added perceptual skills. Also included in this phase of the program were materials and activities designed to focus on the development of handwriting skills and basic reading. These included use of the Frostig Program of Pictures and Patterns; physical activities aimed at improving coordination, balance, flexibility and rhythm; Montessori type materials; and the individualization of instruction which was accomplished through the use of self-selected and self-paced materials."

"The improvement of the child's self-image was an integral part of the total IRIT program. Small and full length mirrors gave the pupils an opportunity to see themselves, while each center provided a camera to photograph each child. Pictures taken were not only sent home, but were also used to provide a further basis for language stimulation. To facilitate a home and school relationship, conferences were held with parents before the pupils entered the IRIT cycle. In addition, an open house was held for each cycle and here the parents were given the opportunity to become familiar with each area of the program. Parents were also encouraged to visit the center weekly, and to take home materials to use with their children in support of the reading program."
(R6,p.76-79 as emended by the director)

Evaluation:

An evaluation of the program in 1968-69 conducted by the Hartford Board of Education concludes:

1. Significant mean reading gains were recorded by group, for the majority of the primary grade pupils who had been enrolled in the program. These gains, which appeared greatest when the Primary Mental Abilities was used as the instrument of choice were considered to be a valid indication of school ability by members of the reading team staffs.

2. Parents continued to be pleased with the IRIT program and generally reported that the instruction seemed to be helping their children.

3. While teachers were generally favorable to the program, there was some indication that neither an improvement in achievement nor in adjustment was immediately evidenced by some children upon their return to the regular reading program. (R6,P.89)

Reviewing the effectiveness of the program in prior years, a study by the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences states:

> The primary results of the IRIT program have been measured in terms of pre-and posttesting, using various forms of the California Reading Achievement Test. Significant gains were noted in the areas of vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading achievement....A follow-up study indicated that, after 7 months into the school year following IRIT, reading scores were being maintained or improved upon in a regular classroom setting. (R1,p.1-2)

In noting the amount of gain, AIR further states that:

> growth in reading skills during this brief 6-10 week period, the average stay in a Reading Center, approximates 1 school year in terms of grade-equivalent scores as compared with a predicted 6-7 week gain for disadvantaged pupils over a 10-week period. (R1,p.7)

Budget:

Funded under the State Act for Disadvantaged Children, the total cost of the program during the 1968-69 school year was $132,300. According to the director, $18,400 was spent for materials and equipment; the rest was used for salaries and other expenses.

References:

1. U.S. Office of Education. Intensive Reading Instructional Teams, Hartford, Connecticut. Washington, D.C., U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, 1969. (It Works, 2.) (A larger study of"exemplary programs", of which this is a part, is available as ERIC document no. ED023777, mf $1.50, hc $17.15.)

2. "Intensified teaching technics help grade school students read better." Nation's Schools Research Summaries, v 81, February 1968. p 61-62.

3. Wood, M. Beatrice. Hartford's I.R.I.T. program for the disadvantaged. n.p., n.d.

4. Hartford, Conn. Board of Education. Where the action is; an evaluation, 1966-1967. Hartford, Conn., The Board, 1967. (ERIC / ED013865, mf $0.75, hc $6.60.)

5. _____ Patterns for progress; an evaluation, 1967-1968. Hartford, Conn., The Board, 1968.

6. _____ Focus on action; an evaluation, 1968-1969. Hartford, Conn., The Board, 1969.

ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) documents on microfiche or in hard copy may be ordered from EDRS, The National Cash Register Company, 4936 Fairmont Ave., Bethesda, Maryland 20014, using the ERIC accession number.

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GRADE 1
READING CENTERS

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